

**TESTIMONY ON SB 33
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24, 2014**

Representative Rojas, Senator Osten and Members of the Planning & Development Committee.

My name is Serena Neal-Sanjurjo, a second generation New Haven resident. I'm here as a Community Economic Development professional, working within the Hill neighborhood, with residents, community leadership, stakeholders and representatives from the City of New Haven's Economic Development Administration to testify on SB 33, which would create a new development entity to remerchandise Union Station, build a new train station parking garage, and promote redevelopment in the Hill neighborhood that would significantly impact the City of New Haven and the region.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you this morning. I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of the work and consensus building underway within the Hill neighborhood and how SB 33 seeks to address the need for future development impacting Union Station and the surrounding neighborhood.

Over the past two years, the City of New Haven's EDA, supported by DECD and HUD, have worked on the ground in the Hill neighborhood to develop a comprehensive plan for redevelopment. In December of last year, The Hill-to-Downtown Community Plan became the product of that work. The plan is available online at <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/EconomicDevelopment/Projects/ReadMore.asp> .

Through dozens of community and stakeholder meetings, planning and commission meetings, the community has realized a new vision for the Hill, and that vision includes Union Station. For many years, the station was not recognized as a part of the neighborhood: it served a constituency that did not live in the Hill. Based on studies conducted as a part of this process, we learned that more than 700,000 people utilize the station annually and this number has grown over the past year. For local stakeholders in the Hill, this has been a missed opportunity. Through the planning process, residents, homeowners, businesses owners and government have developed a shared vision for the neighborhood that includes Union Station as a viable economic entity that provides an opportunity for job creation, business growth and economic stability.

One of the goals of the Hill-to-Downtown Community Plan is to create a new public space, Union Square, surrounded by new housing and retail that will provide direct access to Union Station, and become a focus of activity serving local residents, area workers and visitors to the region.

The Authority will cultivate new investment and strengthen our neighborhood revitalization efforts. SB 33 articulates one possible structure for creating a vital partner to realize the Hill neighborhood's vision for growth, as well as support and enhance the City New Haven, the region and the State of Connecticut's economic development initiatives. We envision It lays out a locally-focused entity, with representatives from the State, City, community and major stakeholders, all committed to ensuring that the goals of the Hill-to-Downtown Community Plan are realized.

As this legislation progresses, we look forward to working with you, Governor Malloy, and members of his administration to produce legislation that reflects the shared vision of what Union Station, transit-oriented development in Connecticut, and New Haven itself can and should be.

On behalf of the contributors to the Hill to Downtown Community Plan who have invested countless hours, intense meetings and a relentless commitment to this process, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to present this testimony. Thank you very much for your consideration.